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U. S. Department of Agriculture

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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Wednesday, October 2, 1935

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

SUBJECT: "USING THE GRAPE CROP." Information from the Bureau of Plant Industry and the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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I don't need to mention to any alert housekeeper that one good way of feeding the family economically is to take advantage of food bargains -- real bargains, I mean, not foods just advertised under that name. I'm talking, for example, about foods that are cheap at certain seasons because they are plentiful. News of any big crop is a cue for the housewife to get out her cookbook or recipe file and refresh her memory about good ways to use the food while it is low in cost. Nothing more convenient than a collection of reliable recipes to tell you how to use it in everyday meals and also how to put it up for winter.

Right now is a good time to line up your favorite grape recipes. You'll probably need them all, for grapes are good news this fall. They're one of our largest fruit crops. And they lend themselves to many different uses.

Here in America we grow 3 distinct types of grapes. Two of them are native to this country -- were growing wild when the early settlers landed. The native grapes are the muscadines of the South Atlantic and Gulf States and the bunch grapes of the more northern states. Both are juicy, slip-skin, rather tart grapes. The third kind of grape that we grow in this country is an immigrant -- the European grape which we have brought over and welcomed to our western shores. It is the grape of history and the Bible, sweeter and firmer in flesh than the others and it goes by the general name of vinifera. The vinifera is an immigrant that has made good, too, for economically it is the most important of the 3 types of grapes. Well, the reason that this Old World grape grows chiefly in California is that it needs a warm, dry climate. It doesn't thrive east of the Rocky Mountains because of climatic conditions which foster various grape diseases. But in time we may be growing these grapes more generally over the country since the scientists are developing disease-resistant stocks.

Well, next in economic importance is the northern, slip-skin bunch grape, developed largely from the wild native grapes. Probably the best-known variety -- in fact, the best-known grape east of the Rockies -- is the blue Concord. I don't need to describe this popular grape which we Americans consume in such quantities both as fresh fruit in the fall and in grape juice and jelly. One reason for the Concord's popularity is that it is a productive grower. Also, it is a good jelly-maker and yields delicious juice. Other members of the northern, bunch-grape group are: the small, red-skinned, sweet Delaware grape; the Catawba -- one of the earliest native grapes to be cultivated; and the green Niagara.

One reason why farm homes of the South -- that is, the Southeast and the Gulf States -- have continued raising and using muscadine grapes through the years is that these happen to be particularly resistant to our most serious grape diseases. Of all the muscadine varieties probably the light-colored Scuppernong is the most popular and widely used. It is so common, in fact, that many a farmer thinks of it in a class by itself -- not as a muscadine variety, not even as a kind of grape, just as a Scuppernong. The Scuppernong isn't a particularly good table grape. But it makes excellent sirup, juice, marmalade, spiced and canned grapes. The Thomas -- another less common muscadine variety -- is also excellent for preserving in various ways. Muscadines are not quite as good for jelly making as the northern grapes, both wild and cultured, because they contain less pectin. Muscadines have a musky odor and flavor that you don't find in more northern grapes. They aren't shipped in quantities partly because they are more perishable, partly because people in other parts of the country haven't cultivated a taste for them. But these grapes have so many uses that no one raising them should let any go to waste. You can cook the juice down with calcium carbonate to make a delicious fruit sirup; you can bottle the juice "as is"; and you can make marmalade, catsup and so on from these southern grapes.

The sweet, firm western grapes are excellent for desserts and salad. They also are often used for canning, for juice and wine, even for preserves of various kinds. They are the only kind of grape suitable for drying as raisins and much of the crop each year goes into raisins.

So much for kinds of grapes and their general uses. Now let's get back to recipes. A very thrifty way to use grapes -- I'm referring now chiefly to those of the slip-skin varieties -- is to extract the juice and put it up either as bottled juice or as jelly -- and then use the left-over pulp or pomace, as some call it, to make grape butter or some other sweet spread. I have here one of the best recipes I know for grape butter. It's a simple one, too, that you can probably remember without writing down. This recipe calls for Concord grapes. But I daresay it would be successful with other varieties of eastern grapes. The ingredients number five. Here they are: 6 cups of pulp..... 3 cups of sugar..... 1 teaspoon cinnamon..... one-half teaspoon allspice..... and one-fourth teaspoon of salt. There are the ingredients. Here's how you make the butter. Sieve and measure the pulp left after extracting the juice. Add half as much sugar as pulp. Mix the spices and add. Cook the mixture for 30 minutes, stirring constantly. If the butter lacks tartness, add a little lemon juice.

Grape butter tends to stick and scorch on the bottom of the kettle if you don't keep it stirring. Often an asbestos mat underneath protects it. But it should cook rapidly to keep its fresh flavor. Long slow cooking makes it dull.

at Washington, D. C.,

The Department of Agriculture has several publications to help you use your grape crop to best advantage. I suggest particularly Farmers' Bulletin No. 1075, telling you how to make unfermented grape juice at home. Once more -- No. 1075 called "Making Unfermented Grape Juice at Home." You're welcome to a copy as long as the supply lasts.

